



United States Senator

Kent Conrad

[www.conrad.senate.gov](http://www.conrad.senate.gov)

North Dakota

Summer 2007

Dear Friend:

Among all the states of the Union, none is more linked to farming – and to family farmers – than our home state of North Dakota. Farming is a \$4 billion-a-year industry in North Dakota, and one of every five North Dakotans earns their living from farming or ranching. Family farming is a way of life here, and it should remain so.

Having a sensible farm policy is among my top priorities in Washington, D.C. I am involved in many things that matter to rural families, such as fair trade, better health care and road building. But I don't know of another topic that is as crucial to all of North Dakota as a common-sense Farm Bill.

This Congress has a great opportunity as we work toward the next Farm Bill, to improve on the existing 2002 Farm Bill. But we face serious challenges. First, a sea of red ink created by six years of deficit spending. And we have opposition from an East Coast media that is influencing public opinion against a federal Farm Bill. Having said that, you know I will be working hard every day on behalf of the many thousands of North Dakota farm and ranch families.

This newsletter should serve you as an overview of what lies before us and as a record of what we have accomplished by working together. I want to know what you think, so please feel free to contact me by writing a letter, calling one of my state offices, or visiting me online at [www.conrad.senate.gov](http://www.conrad.senate.gov).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

KENT CONRAD

United States Senator

## Victory in the Fight for Disaster Aid

Senator Kent Conrad and the North Dakota congressional delegation secured \$3 billion in disaster assistance for farmers and ranchers who suffered losses from severe weather. Originally authored by Senator Conrad, the legislation will mean more than \$150 million in disaster relief for North Dakota's family farmers and ranchers.

"It has been a long, hard fight but our efforts will pay off for rural America. This relief package will provide a life-line to family farmers and ranchers in North Dakota and across the nation," Senator Conrad said.

North Dakota producers saw a cycle of natural disasters, with floods and heavy rain in some parts of North Dakota in 2005, and a years-long drought searing other parts of the state through 2006.

The legislation will help producers who have suffered weather-related crop production shortfalls, quality losses and damage to livestock feed supplies.



Senator Conrad leads an ag disaster rally on Capitol Hill.

# North Dakota's Voice in the Farm Bill Debate

The success of our North Dakota farmers and ranchers can be directly attributed to their hard work and ingenuity. Having a solid federal farm policy helps farmers overcome trade advantages held by our global competitors, and it helps family farmers stay on the land through market swings and natural disasters.

Now, Congress is working on a bill to improve on the 2002 Farm Bill. As both Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee and a senior member of the Agriculture Committee, Senator Conrad is in a unique position to influence the new legislation. He was a chief architect of the 2002 Farm Bill, which gave North Dakota more support per capita than any other state, and he has taken a lead role negotiating this new Farm Bill.

To prepare for writing the next Farm Bill, Senator Conrad is holding a series of hearings to collect input from family farmers, ranchers and business leaders from across North Dakota. They've said they like the current Farm Bill, but would like some improvements, including:

- Enact permanent disaster assistance and reform crop insurance so producers can better plan for recovery from severe crop losses.
- Strengthen energy provisions, so farmers can help make America energy independent while creating new market opportunities.
- Maintain and enhance the farm safety net through a better balanced commodity program.

“This is an important discussion. The Farm Bill not only affects farmers, but Main Street business owners in farm country and in our major cities,” Senator Conrad said. “The impact of what happens on the farm doesn’t stop at the farm gate. A growing farm economy helps everyone – and farm disasters hurt us all.”



Senator Conrad meets with agricultural scientists at the Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory in Mandan.

### North Dakota in the Farm Bill (2002-2006)

- \$2.78 billion in major crop, conservation, and export programs have been paid to North Dakota farmers and ranchers.
- \$642 million in farm loans have been distributed to North Dakota producers.
- \$1.35 billion in safety net programs have been distributed to North Dakota producers in the form of LDPs, direct payments, and counter-cyclical payments.
- \$550 million in Conservation Reserve Program payments have been provided to North Dakotans.
- \$642 million in disaster payments have assisted North Dakota producers with production losses.

Source: North Dakota Farm Service Agency



Senator Conrad receives the Golden Triangle Award from Robert Carlson, president of the North Dakota Farmers Union. The Golden Triangle, the National Farmers Union’s most prestigious award, recognizes the Senator for his leadership in protecting family farmers through his hard work strengthening the Farm Bill.

# Open Fields is a Big Boost for Hunting and Fishing

There is probably no better time to finally see passage of Open Fields – Senator Conrad’s unique answer to the crunch for land available to hunt and fish – than right now as Congress works on the Farm Bill.

At a press conference on Capitol Hill earlier this year, Senator Conrad introduced his Open Fields bill for the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. He was joined by Kansas Senator Pat Roberts and representatives from some of the nation’s largest outdoor organizations, including the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Pheasants Forever and the National Rifle Association.

The popular bipartisan legislation provides federal funds to those states, including North Dakota, that offer incentives to farmers and ranchers to voluntarily open their fields to hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities.

“Hunting and fishing are a part of our heritage. They are traditions as old as America itself,” Senator Conrad said. “But all too often today, America’s anglers and hunters are finding their opportunities limited because so much private land is closed off. Open Fields could change that. My bill gives rural America an economic shot in the arm and protects the land for future generations to enjoy the great outdoors.”

Open Fields has been endorsed by a long list of sporting, conservation and farming groups, including the Izaak Walton League, Ducks Unlimited, the National Farmers Union, the National Farm Bureau and the National Rifle Association.



Senator Conrad is joined by Congressman Earl Pomeroy to introduce Open Fields.

## North Dakota as the Nation’s Powerhouse

As gas prices climb and unrest in the Middle East continues, pressure mounts to make America less dependent on foreign oil. Senator Conrad believes the U.S. can turn away from the Mid East and turn toward the Midwest to help meet America’s energy demands.

“Energy production is the single greatest opportunity for agriculture and our rural communities and I will be pressing for a stronger Energy Title in the 2007 Farm Bill,” said Senator Conrad, the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee’s Subcommittee on Energy, Science and Technology.

Many of the energy provisions sought by Senator Conrad in the Farm Bill are also part of the BOLD Energy Act he introduced last year. The BOLD Energy Act – for Breaking Our Long-term Dependence on foreign energy – offers a roadmap for leading the nation to greater energy independence.

A key component of BOLD is to promote production of biodiesel. The BOLD Act extends the renewable fuel standard and establishes an alternative diesel fuel standard. It also extends tax credits for biodiesel for five years.

“Whether through BOLD or the Farm Bill, our nation could rely more on farmers to fuel our energy needs and begin to rely less on energy imported from unstable regions in the world,” Senator Conrad said.



A farmer works a North Dakota field.

## Ag Email Alerts

Interested in receiving Ag and Trade related email updates? Visit [www.conrad.senate.gov](http://www.conrad.senate.gov) and sign up for regular updates from Senator Conrad on issue areas important to you.



Senator Kent Conrad's

# Agriculture Report

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